

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

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### **PELATH: MEASURED OPTIMISM MARKS ORGANIZATION DAY**

INDIANAPOLIS – As the Indiana General Assembly reconvened today in preparation for its 2006 legislative session, State Rep. Scott Pelath (D-Michigan City) said that much work must be done to overcome an unusually charged political atmosphere throughout the nation.

"More than two-thirds of Americans believe that our nation is on the wrong track," said Pelath. "While this year's Organization Day was marked by the usual enthusiasm for the work ahead, we cannot disregard the sense that many people have that Indiana must right its course."

Under Indiana's constitution, the General Assembly gathers for one day each November in preparation for the next year's legislative session. Pelath said it typically serves as an opportunity for the Governor, the Speaker of the House, and leaders of the minority party to highlight their priorities.

"Our state is wrought with controversies, many of which are man-made," said Pelath. "Schools throughout Indiana – including those here in LaPorte County -- are coping with major cuts in funding. At the same time, Indiana is building up a state revenue surplus by shifting hundreds of millions in expenses to local property taxpayers.

"Time zone debates are raging throughout Indiana, and we risk becoming even more divided by our clocks," he noted. "The Administration has made a mammoth transportation proposal that includes selling off our toll road and forcing major toll hikes – ideas that are sure to rankle many. State employees are rallying at the Statehouse to protect their jobs from privatization efforts that will turn state government over to profiteers."

Pelath said that, while intense disagreements are always part of the legislative process, it is unique to have so many issues raging in a short session. Even so, the General Assembly has a duty to ensure that every major proposal receives dedicated consideration.

"With the other party in charge of both the Legislature and the Governor's office, I certainly will not get my way on every issue," said Pelath. "Regardless, it was heartening to hear the Speaker of the House express a desire to renew past spirits of bipartisanship."

Pelath did cite one non-partisan matter that could arise during this year's session: calls for LaPorte County to join the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA). The RDA is tasked with overseeing capital projects in Lake and Porter Counties.

"Such a move would force LaPorte County to surrender millions in riverboat revenue to a board dominated by the Governor and Lake County. While the costs are clear, what we would receive in return is murky at best," said Pelath. "I will work to keep us out of the RDA until a clear consensus of local leaders and citizens tells me otherwise."

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